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LocalNews

Games Gone By | No comments posted.

Arcade stocks classic games along with new titles

By Kate Weber - Daily Chronicle

In the age of iPods, Wiis and plasma televisions, Patrick O'Malley still knows a classic electronic when he sees it.

O'Malley, owner of Star Worlds Arcade in DeKalb, has been an arcade video game collector for more than two decades and has shared his enthusiasm for the game with DeKalb for three years at his Lincoln Highway location.

As a boy, O'Malley loved video games so much that he talked his parents into allowing him to own several arcade games and keep them at their home.

As the collection grew, his parents' patience thinned.

"They wanted all my friends out of their house, so I decided to open a business," O'Malley said.

With arcade games dating as far back as 1977 and stretching in price to \$5,500, O'Malley not only has a shop filled with games, but also restores, repairs and supplies arcade games to local businesses. As the years pass, O'Malley is sad to see the face of video gaming change.

"Being in the arcade business is not as profitable because the home systems have taken over and there are so many other forms of entertainment," O'Malley said. "There are so many things competing at once now."

O'Malley keeps his stock on a regularly rotating basis to keep inventory fresh and customers coming back to check out new games. Because of the store's proximity to Northern Illinois University, O'Malley sees a lot of college students coming to Star Worlds Arcade to relive their childhood.

"We have been very successful with the college kids who come to this side of town wanting to remember these games from the '80s," O'Malley said. "Even their parents see games that they used to play."

Classic is the name of the game at this store, even when it comes to purchasing tickets to play. Token prices have stayed the same since the 1980s: one token costs 25 cents, five cost \$1 and 30 cost \$5. Star Worlds Arcade is also available for birthday parties, where attendees receive free play for any of the games at the shop.

Video game enthusiast Sara Hansford, 15, held a small birthday party at the arcade Saturday and, because she is a regular, was happy to get the chance to play the games she loves as much as she wanted. Compared to popular home game consoles, Hansford sees the classic arcade games as a different kind of fun.

"There are just more games to choose from," Hansford said.

She also enjoys playing the older video games to catch a glimpse at what kids played decades ago.

No matter the age, the favored game at Star Worlds Arcade seemed to be the timeless Ms. Pac-Man. No computer graphics or 3-D effects to be found, the little yellow dot with the perfect pink bow still looks - and eats - great after all these years.

Photographer Kate Weber can be contacted at kweber@daily-chronicle.com.

Story Photos



Birthday girl Sara Hansford, 15, focuses on a game of Ms. Pac-Man Saturday afternoon during her party at DeKalb's Star Worlds Arcade on Lincoln Highway. Hansford has been a video game fan since she was little, but still enjoys the simplicity of the original arcade games. "It's challenging and it's fun," she said. Chronicle photo KATE WEBER

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